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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

Letter dated 29 June 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement delivered by the representative of the Russian Federation during the 27th meeting of States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination under the agenda item on other matters (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly under agenda item 68 (a).

(*Signed*) Petr **Ilichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 29 June 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement delivered on 22 June 2017 by the representative of the Russian Federation during the 27th meeting of States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination under agenda item 6, "Other matters"

Chair,

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on certain aspects of the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the oldest human rights treaty body. As at meetings of States parties to other international human rights treaties held last year, our proposals and comments are based on our own experience of interaction with the Committee.

First of all, we would like to note that the Russian Federation supports the work of the Committee and considers that any attempts to limit its competence as defined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, including in the settlement of disputes among States parties, are unacceptable. We are convinced that the provisions of the Convention concerning the powers of this specialized Committee must be respected just as strictly as the articles concerning specific human rights.

At the same time, the Committee's practices have become rather problematic. In our view, multilingualism has recently become one of the most pressing issues. Unfortunately, the United Nations Secretariat is being overly liberal in its interpretation of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 68/268, entitled "Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system". In that regard, we would like to recall that, according to this document, States parties should be able to interact with the treaty bodies, without prejudice, in any of the six official languages of the United Nations. The fact that the treaty bodies use three official working languages does not rule out the inclusion of a fourth language, at the request of the State concerned. Furthermore, this language should be used not only during the Committee's dialogue with a national interministerial delegation, but also during meetings with civil society institutions.

Chair,

In early August 2017, the twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism will be considered at the ninety-third session of the Committee. In this regard, we expect Russian interpretation to be provided at all stages of the presentation of Russian reports. Otherwise, a situation could arise in which the Committee's experts will have to rely solely on information from major international non-governmental organizations, but the positions of civil society representatives working directly on the ground will remain unheard.

Unlike the other treaty bodies, this Committee has a highly questionable practice whereby the list of themes in relation to a periodic report is sent to the reporting State less than two months before the forthcoming presentation. As a result, the interministerial delegation does not have sufficient time to prepare substantive replies, which clearly does not meet the objective of a constructive dialogue between the Committee and the State concerned.

Chair,

In conclusion, we would like to draw attention to the initiative launched by the Committee to establish a single inter-committee working group on individual communications. What are the legal grounds for this proposal? The advisability of this process is also highly doubtful, given the different substantive and objective content of the relevant conventions, as well as the different numbers of States parties.

Thank you.